

Drought Task Force Meeting
Monday, July 23, 2012
2-4 pm CDT
State Emergency Operations Center Amphitheater

In attendance:

Gov. Dennis Daugaard	Bob Schneider, SDGF&P	Kevin Fridley, SDDA
Mark Rath, SDDENR	Lynn Beck, SDDENR	Bob Wilcox, SDACC
Terry Woster, SDDPS	Katie Konda, SDDA	Aaron Jordan, SDNG
Brady Mallory, KELO TV	Doug Hinkle, SDDPS-FMO	Paul Merriman, SDDPS-FMO
Morris Elcock, SDARWS	Lynn Stoltenburg, USDA-FSA	Craig Schaunaman, USDA-FSA
Jamie White, USDA-FSA	Paul Hanson, USDA-FSA	Emmett Keyser, SDGF&P
Bill Slovek, SDCA	Emily Kiel, SDBIT	Mitch Fargen, SDFU
Jason Bauder, SDDPS-OEM	Jason Glodt, SDGOV	Nathan Sanderson, SDGOV
Jamie Crew, SDDA	Lowell Messman, SDFB	Steve Harding, SDDM
Jodi Anderson, SDCA	Walt Bones, SDDA	Jeff Zimprich, USDA-NRCS
Rick Vallery, SD Wheat	Tina Titze, SDDPS-OEM	Trevor Jones, SDDPS
Dennis Todey, SDSU	Jon Farris, SDDA	Kristi Turman, SDDPS-OEM

Craig Schaunaman provided an overview of the USDA secretarial disaster designation process, including the recent changes that allow counties to work directly with their USDA Chief Executive Director to obtain a disaster designation. Mr. Schaunaman reminded everyone that to qualify for a disaster designation, one commodity must show a 30% yield loss. He also suggested that counties affected by the drought issue an agricultural disaster resolution to ensure the county is designated as a primary county, which may be a qualifier if Congress appropriates additional drought aid. Mr. Schaunaman explained that the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) operates under different criteria than the disaster process. CRP acres will be available after August 1, which is the end of the primary nesting stage for pheasants. He also described the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), which provides funding for transporting and piping water. At this time all ECP applications submitted to date have been denied due to lack of funding. Mr. Schaunaman and his staff stressed the importance of including the new disaster designation process on the Drought Task Force website.

Dr. Dennis Todey provided an overview of the current drought situation and a drought outlook for the next several months. The short-term forecast does not appear to contain any drought relief, and it could be October before drought conditions improve. Conditions are comparable to 2006. The entire state is in D0-D2 drought monitor status. Warmer-than-normal temperatures and lower-than-normal precipitation is predicted through October. Fire Meteorologist Darren Clabo stated the fires are behaving like the Galena and Westberry Trails fires from 1988. Conditions are extremely dry with low humidity and high fuel loads from previous wet years.

Lynn Beck and Mark Rath updated the task force on current water conditions, outlooks, and actions. Aquifers are still in good shape and are just now beginning to show the effects of the drought. There are

currently no concerns about aquifers. Bureau of Reclamation dams are still 65-98% full, but some days may start to exhibit drought effects. Lake levels across the state are still ok. Shut-off orders have been issued for Battle Creek near Hermosa, Whitewood Creek near Whitewood, and the Keyapaha River in south-central South Dakota. Shut-off advisories have been placed on the Cheyenne River.

Morris Elcock reported that rural water systems that have expanded in recent years are experiencing record flows and are operating at 86-94% capacity. Those systems that have NOT expanded have no room for error. On Wednesday, July 25th, all rural water managers will be meeting to hear the latest information on the drought and share ideas on contingency planning. In one recent instance where a system was experiencing a leak, users were asked to conserve water. Users complied with the request, the leak was located and repaired, and the system was recharged and running again in short order. Mr. Elcock noted that days below 100 degrees exhibit a much lower demand on systems, and even small rain showers really drop the demand.

USDA-NRCS representative Jeff Zimprich reported that the Environmental Quality Reserve program has requested additional funding to combat drought's effects on livestock water. A decision on the additional funding should come yet this week.

Jon Farris provided an update on behalf of the Division of Wildland Fire Suppression. All division personnel were engaged in firefighting operations and were unable to attend the meeting. An abundance of moisture in recent years has produced tall, thick fuels on the prairie and in the Black Hills. Consequently, fires are burning hot, and the dry, windy weather is producing erratic fire behavior. Additional discussions on firefighting efforts will be occurring.

Bob Schneider and Emmett Keyser reported that the SDGF&P is working with USDA-FSA on the release of CRP acres. The Department has more than a dozen firefighting skid units and several water tenders, most of which are currently mounted in GF&P vehicles. Several of these are being used at present as a precautionary measure when GF&P personnel are mowing or utilizing equipment in the field that could spark a fire. GF&P is abiding by county burn bans and is watching lake access issues. The Foster Bay ramp on Lake Oahe is currently closed due to low water. SDGF&P may request a Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) be available during the fall hunting season in northwest South Dakota and may utilize spotter aircraft during major season openers if warranted by weather and fire conditions.

Fire Marshal Paul Merriman stated his office is available to support firefighting efforts as needed.

LT. COL Aaron Jordan reported that the SDNG is providing air assets for firefighting and personnel to assist with fire camp security. The SDNG may be available for future missions, and anyone requiring SDNG support should inform SDDPS-OEM immediately, so that mission availability can be assessed.

Bob Wilcox with SDACC believes local officials are understanding the new agricultural disaster designation process and he is continuing to see disaster resolutions being issued.

Agricultural groups invited to the task force meeting were asked for questions and comments. The Farm Bureau and SDCA commented that producers need access to CRP acres.

Emily Kiel with SDBIT will be updating the Drought Task Force website. All task force members should review the current site and submit updates to Emily as soon as possible. Ms. Kiel also requested social media links for agencies that have them. She suggested changing the website address to drought.sd.gov, or something similar. SDSU also has a hay exchange that should be added. The goal is to launch the updated website yet this week.

The next Drought Task Force meeting will be held Monday, July 30, 2012, from 2-4 pm in the State EOC amphitheater.